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WESTERN EUROPE -- CANADA -- INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

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Italy's Christian Democrats Approve Limited
Dialogue with Communists at Local Level

Italy's Christian Democratic Party last week ended its opposition to discussing political issues with the Communists at the regional and local level.

Under former party secretary Fanfani, the Christian Democrats always flatly declared themselves against any increase in cooperation with the Communists at the local and national levels. Interim party leader Zaccagnini, however, won unanimous support from the Christian Democratic executive directorate for an "open comparison of ideas" with the Communists on local legislative matters. The Christian Democrats did, at the same time, maintain their ban on participation with the Communists in local governments.

The new element in the Christian Democratic position, apart from its tone, is the party's willingness to bring its contacts with the Communists out into the open. As a practical matter, the two parties have consulted discreetly in many areas for years. The Communists have sought to make the practice more visible as another way of establishing their party's respectability.

The question of whether the new standards should apply at the national level will inevitably arise when the fragile Moro government comes under review this fall. The Socialists are making Christian Democratic acceptance of "indirect" Communist participation a condition for their participation in a new center-left coalition government.

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The new Christian Democratic position on consultations with the Communists at the local level is, above all, a recognition of political realities. Christian Democratic organizations in 5 of the 20 regions--Lombardy, Marche, Lazio, Calabria, and Basilicata--had already agreed to overt consultation between the regional center-left governments and the Communists. The same thing is happening in a number of cities and provinces.

More characteristic of post-election developments, however, is the proliferation of Communist-Socialist coalitions. The "red belt," where such coalitions have been the rule, has now grown from three to five regions with the addition of Liguria and Piedmont.

Leftist administrations control all cities north of Rome with over 300,000 population--Milan, Turin, Venice, Florence, Genoa, and Bologna. Close to a third of the 94 provinces have, or are expected to get, leftist administrations.

The Communists are not entirely happy with this trend because it does not advance party chief Berlinguer's goal of eventually sharing power with the Christian Democrats. The Communists continue to believe they need to attain power that way in order to avoid provoking a reaction in centrist and conservative circles.

The Communists say, for example, that they are "not a bit happy" about the situation in Milan. The Communist-Socialist coalition there was made possible by the defection of a small group of Christian Democrats and Social Democrats, a Socialist-engineered development that the Communists fear will sour their relations with the Milanese Christian Democrats. The Communists are trying to patch things up by offering the Christian Democrats continued access to municipal patronage.

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EC Debates Common Position on Pretoria's
UN Membership

The EC Nine are divided over the question of how to handle the South African credentials issue in the next session of the UN General Assembly that begins September 16. The outcome of this debate will have a strong impact on moves to suspend Israeli membership.

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Presumably, Pretoria's credentials will again be challenged and Luxembourg Prime Minister Thorn, the General Assembly President for the session, will have to rule on participation. The so-called "Hambro ruling," under which South Africa escaped suspension despite a vote rejecting its credentials, had prevailed since 1970 to last year. Assembly President Bouteflika ended this precedent last year by ruling--illegally, according to the Charter--that the result of the negative vote was to suspend Pretoria's participation.

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[redacted] there are sharp differences between the EC Nine over reaching a common position which would then be urged upon Thorn. Faris vehemently holds that Thorn, in the event, should again rule against South Africa, while the Germans are insisting that he should revert to the earlier precedent.

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[redacted] Thorn will be more strongly influenced by the French position, especially if he must decide early in the session as he might find it politically undesirable to aggravate the non-aligned members so early on. The other members have apparently not reached any firm position

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on the matter. Belgium has suggested that Thorn should uphold the Bouteflika ruling, but formally state that his personal preference is against suspension.

The outcome of the discussion is particularly important in that it will presumably set a precedent in connection with current efforts by Middle Eastern and non-aligned states to suspend Israel. In this instance, however, the Nine unanimously oppose the move and are actively trying to head off a credentials debate.

The South African permanent representative to the UN told Ambassador Moynihan on August 7 that Pretoria will not attend the UN Seventh Special Session and will send only a minimal representation to the regular session. They are convinced that Thorn will rule in Pretoria's favor but that this decision will be challenged by the Assembly and the challenge upheld. In this event, the South Africans would withdraw from the session.

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